1778 Survey Team

A familiar road manager was leaning on the side of the wagon, drinking a cup of coffee and watching the sun rise. Noticing Rain, he spared her a crooked smile.

"Ah. It's you again, Rani."

Rain almost stumbled.

'Damn.'

Rani is what she was known as on the road crew. Since she was hiding here, using her own name would have been silly... the problem was that Rain had not thought about that right until the moment she was asked to introduce herself.

So, put on the spot, she had failed to come up with anything and mumbled the first thing that entered her mind.

Which was why her teacher had mocked her relentlessly for a whole week.

"No, really? Rani? The best you could do was shift two letters around? I just can't... gods, everything I've been through, and I'll die of laughter..."

Rain had endured the mockery for as long as she could, and then kindly reminded her teacher that he went around calling himself Shadow.

So, he wasn't in a position to critique her naming sense, was he?

That, luckily, had shut him up.

In any case, by now, she was more or less accustomed to responding to "Rani".

Which was not to say that she wasn't embarrassed every time she heard it.

"Good morning, chief."

The man stared at her for a few moments, then sighed.

"Listen, Rani... I get it, the pay in the advanced camps is higher. But what's the use of having money if you are dead? It's quite dangerous out there, you know! A young girl like you should just stay here in the main camp. Actually, even the main camp is not a good place. If my daughter wanted to come here from Ravenheart, I would have locked her up."

He took a sip of coffee and shook his head.

"Why don't you change your mind?"

Rain gave him her best smile.

"Still, chhief... I hear they are establishing a new camp soon. Please reassign me."

He grimaced.

"I'm sorry. Actually, all the spots are already filled... it's a tough job, especially now that we are so far away from Ravenheart. We have strict orders to prioritize the strongest and most resilient recruits for these postings."

Seeing that her expression fall, the manager hesitated for a few moments, then let out a heavy sigh.

"Okay, okay... I'll help you out. Just don't pout Rain blinked a couple of times.

"I... I'm not pouting!"

The man laughed.

"Sure, right. Anyway, I can't get you a spot in an advanced camp, but if you just want to get out of the main construction crew and make some extra money, there's another assignment coming up."

Her eyes glistened.

"Really?"

He looked around cautiously, then leaned forward a little:

"I'm only telling you this because you're a good kid and might be suitable for the task. There's a new survey team being formed. The core of the team are Awakened warriors, of course, but they need mundane porters, as well as someone to tend to their daily needs... wash the dishes, patch up tents, stuff like that."

The manager paused for a moment, then added quietly:

"Since survey teams are small and can move freely, It's not as dangerous as staying at an advanced camp. Usually, I would still recommend strong men for the position, but this team is a bit special. It is actually run by a young lady from a Legacy Clan, so... I thought that having a girl of similar age there would be of help.”

He looked at Rain and smiled:

"Play your cards right, Rani, and you might even end up as a retainer of the Legacy clan! Legacies can be snobbish, but still. It's a good opportunity for simple folk like us."

She hesitated for a moment, then grinned.

"Survey team? That's great! Thank you, chief!"

Survey teams were just what they sounded like they were small reconnaissance groups exploring the wilderness to map out the best route for the road to take. Of course, the nature of the job was quite peculiar here in the Dream Realm, where different regions could have entirely different terrain, climate, geology, sky, and even unique laws of physics.

More than that, the survey teams were not only meant to study the landscape, but also to scout out the Nightmare Creatures populating it. If there were especially dangerous abominations ahead, the road would be rerouted to avoid their hunting grounds.

Rain's grin wavered a little.

The road manager meant well... but he clearly knew close to nothing about the Dream Realm. A survey team seemed like a safer bet to him, but actually, there was probably no assignment more dangerous in the road crew.

No wonder they put an actual Legacy in charge of it.

Still... Rain could take care of herself better than any other mundane person here. Plus, being on a survey team was even better for her than running to an advanced camp - the fewer people were around her, the lesser was the possibility of being discovered.

So, this opportunity was a godsend.

Rain gave the road manager a thumbs-up.

"I won't forget it! I'll treat you to something nice once my team returns, chief!"

The man chuckled.

"Yeah, yeah. Just return in one piece, girl... that will be the best gratitude."

With that, he pointed her to a certain tent in the northern part of the camp and said wistfully:

"Go gather your things and report there by the time the morning shift is supposed to start work. I'll do the paperwork by then."

Rain thanked the road manager and turned to leave. As she was walking away, he called out to her.

"May the Queen's grace protect you!"

She halted for a moment.

"Uh.,, yeah, Thanks, You too!"

It felt weird to see how readily the settlers accepted Queen Song as not only their ruler, but also a... a surrogate goddess, of sorts, Sure, the Sovereigns possessed unimaginable power - Saints were already called demigods at times, and the Supremes were far above them in all regards.

But, still... Ki Song was just a human, just like the rest of them. So was the King of Swords. Watching people treat them with religious zeal made Rain a little uncomfortable.

She wasn't really sure why, since most of them were still good people. It was just that there was an inevitable element of surrendering your own judgment when one acted with blind faith... and if you followed someone blindly, who was to say that they would not lead you into a dark place?

On the other hand, perhaps it was only logical that the people of the Song Domain treated their Queen as a deity. Most of them were only alive because of her grace, after all, and would be swallowed by the Nightmare Spell without her. From the point of view of a mundane person, her vast power would indeed seem godlike.

Gathering her pack, Rain asked thoughtfully:

"Teacher... can a person become a god?"

Her shadow moved slightly.

"That's an unexpected question."

He lingered for a few moments, then said neutrally:

"Sure, It's possible."

Rain continued to gather her things, thinking that his answer was over.

But then, her teacher added suddenly:

"Not only is it possible, it is also necessary."

Rain stopped what she was doing and looked at her shadow in surprise.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

He remained silent for a while, then laughed.

"It means just that. Why, do you feel insecure? Alright, alright... I won't insist that you become a goddess... just yet. But honestly, for a student of mine to aim any lower is a bit shameful..."

She stared at the shadow for a while, then scoffed and turned back to her pack.

"...Why did I even ask?!"

Rain was pretty sure that becoming a deity was not in the cards for her.

However, with such a teacher... she definitely had a chance of developing divine patience.